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House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure DEMOCRATS

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Attn: Trucking, International Trade

Oberstar Praises Federal Court Ruling on Mexican Trucks

WASHINGTON—Mexican-domiciled motor carriers must meet U.S. clean air standards before they can be allowed to operate in this country. That's the ruling issued this week by the U.S. Court of Appeals. The ruling drew praise today from Rep. James L. Oberstar (Minn.), Ranking Democratic Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), trucks from Mexico were to be allowed free access to U.S. roads after a three-step phase-in process. Currently, the trucks are limited to a narrow trade zone along the U.S.-Mexican border. Plans to allow the trucks free range within the four border states and, eventually, unlimited travel throughout the United States, have been delayed several times because of safety concerns.

In 2002, the Bush Administration announced it planned to lift the restrictions and allow Mexico-domiciled trucks to travel freely throughout the country. The Court's decision requires the Administration to conduct an environmental impact analysis before it can lift the restrictions.

"I am pleased that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals understands that NAFTA is not intended to lower health and safety standards in the United States," Oberstar said. "Mexican trucks must comply with U.S. laws and regulations if they are going to operate on our roads and streets."

"For years, Democrats in Congress have called upon this Administration and its predecessor to ensure that Mexican trucks will operate safely and in compliance with U.S. laws before they are allowed unfettered access to our nation's roads. The court's ruling shows that the current Administration is blind to these concerns," Oberstar said.

"The United States is obligated to live up to its commitments under NAFTA, but we are not going to compromise the lives, health and well being of our people to do so," Oberstar said.

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